32

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An apparatus for managing network access, comprising:

a billing system element operable to receive one or more packets of a communication flow and to communicate with a price server, wherein the price server is operable to receive a query from the billing system element associated with a pricing parameter relating to a data segment to be accessed by an end user associated with the communication flow, and wherein the price server is operable to return a response to the billing system element that includes the pricing parameter relating to the data segment such that the end user can verify the pricing parameter before accessing the data segment.

2. The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the price server is further operable to provide a selected one of a drop and a forward action, the forward action resulting in the end user being permitted access to the data segment, and wherein the drop action restricts the end user such that he cannot access the data segment.

3. The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the price server is further operable to provide a quota allocation to the end user on a per-flow basis such that the end user is given an amount of quota that may substantially satisfy a current access request being made by the end user.

4.   The apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the billing system element is further operable to communicate with an advice of charge server, the advice of charge server operable to receive a query from the billing system

5   element and to redirect a communication flow associated with the end user to a webpage that is operable to display one or more financial parameters associated with the data segment to the end user.

10   5.   The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein the webpage includes a decision block that allows the end user to select whether he would like to proceed to access the data segment based on one or more of the financial parameters.

15

6.   The apparatus of Claim 1, further comprising:

a Content Services Gateway coupled to the billing system element and operable to communicate with the billing system element in order to manage distribution of

20   quota provided to the end user.

7.   The apparatus of Claim 6, wherein the Content Services Gateway includes a known user table (KUT) operable to store an internet protocol (IP) address

25   associated with the end user, the KUT being further operable to store information associated with first and second network nodes being used by the end user.

8.   The apparatus of Claim 6, wherein the billing system element further comprises a quota server operable to store quota data for the end user that reflects an allotment of information to be provided to the end user,

5   the quota server being operable to be updated in accordance with direction provided by the Content Services Gateway.

9.   The apparatus of Claim 6, wherein the Content

10   Services Gateway further comprises a quota manager element operable to receive identifiers associated with first and second network nodes and to notify the billing system element of a change from the first network node to the second network node.

10. A method for managing network access, comprising:

receiving a query associated with a pricing parameter relating to a data segment to be accessed by an
5   end user associated with a communication flow; and

returning a response to the query that includes the pricing parameter relating to the data segment such that the end user can verify the pricing parameter before accessing the data segment.
10

11. The method of Claim 10, further comprising:

providing a selected one of a drop and a forward action in response to receiving the communication flow, the forward action resulting in the end user being
15   permitted access to the data segment, wherein the drop action restricts the end user such that he cannot access the data segment.

12. The method of Claim 10, further comprising:
20   providing a quota allocation to the end user on a per-flow basis such that the end user is given an amount of quota that may substantially satisfy a current access request being made by the end user.

36

13.   The method of Claim 10, further comprising:

redirecting the communication flow associated with the end user to a webpage that is operable to display one or more financial parameters associated with the data
5   segment to the end user.

14.   The method of Claim 13, further comprising:

managing distribution of quota provided to the end user based on information being provided and associated
10   with the pricing parameter.

15.   The method of Claim 13, further comprising:

storing quota data for the end user that reflects an allotment of information to be provided to the end user.

16. A system for managing network access, comprising:

means for receiving a query associated with a pricing parameter relating to a data segment to be

5   accessed by an end user associated with a communication flow; and

means for returning a response to the query that includes the pricing parameter relating to the data segment such that the end user can verify the pricing

10   parameter before accessing the data segment.

17. The system of Claim 16, further comprising:

means for providing a selected one of a drop and a forward action in response to receiving the communication

15   flow, the forward action resulting in the end user being permitted access to the data segment, wherein the drop action restricts the end user such that he cannot access the data segment.

20   18. The system of Claim 16, further comprising:

means for providing a quota allocation to the end user on a per-flow basis such that the end user is given an amount of quota that may substantially satisfy a current access request being made by the end user.

38

19. The system of Claim 16, further comprising:

means for redirecting the communication flow associated with the end user to a webpage that is operable to display one or more financial parameters associated with the data segment to the end user.

20. The system of Claim 19, further comprising:

means for managing distribution of quota provided to the end user based on information being provided and associated with the pricing parameter.

21. The system of Claim 19, further comprising:

means for storing quota data for the end user that reflects an allotment of information to be provided to the end user.

39

22. Software for managing network access, the
software being embodied in a computer readable medium and
comprising computer code such that when executed is
operable to:

5   receive a query associated with a pricing parameter
relating to a data segment to be accessed by an end user
associated with a communication flow; and

           return a response to the query that includes the
pricing parameter relating to the data segment such that
10   the end user can verify the pricing parameter before
accessing the data segment.

           23. The medium of Claim 22, wherein the code is
further is operable to:

15   provide a selected one of a drop and a forward
action in response to receiving the communication flow,
the forward action resulting in the end user being
permitted access to the data segment, wherein the drop
action restricts the end user such that he cannot access
20   the data segment.

           24. The medium of Claim 22, wherein the code is
further operable to:

           provide a quota allocation to the end user on a per-
25   flow basis such that the end user is given an amount of
quota that may substantially satisfy a current access
request being made by the end user.

25. The medium of Claim 22, wherein the code is further operable to:

redirect the communication flow associated with the end user to a webpage that is operable to display one or 5 more financial parameters associated with the data segment to the end user.

26. The medium of Claim 25, wherein the code is further operable to:

10 manage distribution of quota provided to the end user based on information being provided and associated with the pricing parameter.

27. The medium of Claim 25, wherein the code is 15 further operable to:

store quota data for the end user that reflects an allotment of information to be provided to the end user.